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SUBJECT: AU COMMISSIONER LAMAMRA STRATEGIZES ON SOMALIA,
HOLDS OUT HOPE FOR ERITREA

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1.(SBU) SUMMARY. During a July 30 meeting with Ambassador Rice, AU Commissioner Lamamra said that there is no imminent threat to the TFG, but called for international efforts to assist the TFG in taking back critical pieces of territory and establishing a secure zone of operations. Lamamra discussed plans to hold a special AU Summit on conflict mitigation in Libya on August 31, adding that the U.S. would be invited to "actively observe." He said plans for a second AU Summit on stability and "good neighborliness" in the Horn of Africa were advancing and that Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki would be invited. Finally, Lamamra is taking a wait-and-see approach to stability in Niger, stating that the outcome of the August 4 referendum will be critical.
END SUMMARY.

Lamamra Thinks Creatively on Somalia

12. (SBU) In a July 30 meeting with Ambassador Rice, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramtane Lamamra said that there is no imminent threat to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and that the "ping pong game" over districts between the TFG and al-Shaabab will endure for the foreseeable future. Lamamra urged consideration of an ad-hoc military operation to take back Kismayo (the insurgents' spiritual center and site of an important seaport) as critical to stabilizing the country. Stating that, "the battle for Mogadishu can be won outside of Mogadishu," Lamamra described an idea of organizing a coalition of foreign forces (mentioning Djibouti, Angola and Egypt), along with the Somali Security forces and AMISOM, to take back the port city. He explained that if al-Shaabab understood that Kismayo was endangered, they would "loosen up" on Mogadishu, which would allow the TFG an opening to gain control. He said that conversations with Angola and Egypt about providing troops to the proposed mission were going well. Lamamra noted that AMISOM has full authority to use its troops in support of Somali transitional institutions, and the protection of Kismayo would fall into this provision. In response to Ambassador Rice's question about how the city and port would be held after it is recaptured, Lamamra said that a naval blockade would likely be required to keep the insurgents from returning.

13. (SBU) Thinking creatively, Lamamra proposed the establishment of a "blue zone on the sea" (akin to Baghdad's "Green Zone") off of Somalia's coast that would be a safe

area
for ships holding government offices, a hospital, and
international
organizations. This, he stated, would allow the
international community to operate safely out of the range
of insurgent groups but be present in Mogadishu.

One More Chance for Eritrea

¶4. (SBU) Lamamra said AU thought was being given to holding a special AU Summit in Libya on "stability, security and good neighborliness in the Horn of Africa." He said that although Eritrea would, "like to start over from square one" on the Djibouti Peace Process, the AU would likely invite Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to the Summit and attempt to create a format that will persuade Eritrea to cooperate. Lamamra will ask Libyan President Gaddafi to encourage Isaias to attend the summit, but admitted that, "if Eritrea does not help itself, we cannot help." Ambassador Rice questioned the contrast between the AU's recent call for sanctions against Eritrea and this new idea to make overtures to Isaias.

¶5. (SBU) Lamamra also noted plans for a special August 31 African Union Summit devoted to conflict mitigation. He said that the Summit will focus on the Horn of Africa, including Sudan, Chad, the Great Lakes region and Guinea-Bissau. He said that the U.S. would be invited to "actively observe." Ambassador Rice encouraged Lamamra to focus also on Cote d'Ivoire, which is in need of international attention.

AU Thoughts on Niger

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¶6. (C) Asked by Ambassador Rice for his assessment of the situation in Niger, Lamamra stated that it will become clear with the August 4 resolution whether there will be an "immediate disaster" or not. Lamara stated that the leadership in Niger told ECOWAS that what it has done in Niger is consistent with the will of the people and that the likelihood of a coup d'etat will depend on the referendum's outcome.
RICE